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Coles: I Am a Survivor of Sexual Abuse

New York Jets wide receiver Laveranues Coles is a survivor of sexual abuse.

In a profile in Sunday editions of The New York Times, Coles said he was molested between the ages of 10 and 13 by a man his mother later married.

The Pro Bowl wide receiver thought he was alone in his inner struggles, and too proud to let any outsiders into his personal prison. But Coles recently decided to free himself of his secret in the hopes it might help other children who have endured abuse.

“I haven’t talked about it in ... forever, but I know that holding something like that inside has been a burden for so long,” Coles said Sunday after helping the Jets beat Miami 17-7. “For me to get on this platform that I have, having been in the league and have all the media attention that we have, I think it’s something that should be said.

“If it gets one kid to come out and say, ‘Look, this is happening to me,’ ... I think it’s right.”

Coles remained silent about the abuse for years, instead using it to drive him to become one of the NFL’s best receivers. He said even close friends on the Jets were unaware that he had been abused.

According to the Times, Coles’ stepfather, whose name the receiver didn’t want to reveal, was sentenced to nine years in a Florida prison in 1992 after pleading guilty to the crimes. He served 3½ years, but was later convicted of another crime and has been in prison since 2001.

Coles’ mother, Sirretta, divorced her husband when the abuse was first revealed and sought counseling for the youngster. Coles realizes that coming out with this now publicly will reopen old wounds for the family.

“We’ll talk about it,” Coles said. “I love my mom and we love each other and we’ll talk about it briefly and put it behind us again.”

Coles told The Times that he received counseling, but it clashed with the athletic mentality of shrugging off injuries.

“You just want to put it behind you,” he said. “I think, you know, as a man, when you’re violated in that way, you don’t know how other people are going to take it, how other people are going to view you. There’s so much that comes with revealing that part of your life and story.”

Coles doesn’t worry about what others might think or say about what he went through. He’s proven himself to be a star on the football field, now in his sixth NFL season – and second stint with the Jets after spending the last two years with Washington.

“I think with age comes maturity, and I think now that I’m a little older, I think I can deal with it a little better and I just want to help kids because I think it happens to more people in this world than we actually allow ourselves to believe,” said Coles, 27.

“Coming up, I always felt like I was the only one that ever happened to. Then, when I started going to different sessions, they let me know that it happens to a lot more people.”

Information from The Associated Press was used in this report.

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